

# SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress  
1st Session

Vote No. 153

May 27, 1999, 12:21 p.m.  
Page S-6189 Temp. Record

## DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION/F/A-18E/F Super Hornet Production Cost Cap

**SUBJECT:** National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2000 . . . S. 1059. Santorum motion to table the Feingold amendment No. 443.

### ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 87-11

**SYNOPSIS:** As reported, S. 1059, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2000, will authorize a total of \$288.8 billion, which is \$8.3 billion more than requested by the Clinton Administration and which represents a 2.2-percent real increase in defense spending. Highlights include a 4.8-percent pay raise and a \$3.4 billion increase in military construction.

**The Feingold amendment** would put a cap of \$8.841 billion on the total amount that may be obligated or expended for fiscal years 2000 through 2004 for the production of airframes, contractor-furnished equipment, and engines under the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fighter aircraft program. The cap could be adjusted for the following reasons only: inflation; compliance costs attributable to changes in Federal, State, or local laws; or cost changes due to increases or decreases in the number of aircraft purchased. The Secretary of the Navy would notify Congress of any adjustment to the cap.

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. After debate, Senator Santorum moved to table the amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

**Those favoring** the motion to table contended:

Our colleagues have commented on the supposedly poor performance of the Super Hornet. They are wrong. The Super Hornet will have a 37-percent increase in mission radius, a 60-percent increase in "bringback" payload (the amount of unused ordnance that a plane can carry back from a mission), a 2 to 5 times increase in strike capability, and a 25-percent increase in frame size to accommodate 20 years of upgrades in cooling, power, and other internal systems. The present air war against Yugoslavia clearly illustrates the value of having these types of improvements and the Navy's foresight in planning to acquire them. Further, even if

(See other side)

YEAS (87)				NAYS (11)		NOT VOTING (2)	
Republican (53 or 98%)		Democrats (34 or 77%)		Republicans (1 or 2%)	Democrats (10 or 23%)	Republicans (1)	Democrats (1)
Abraham	Helms	Akaka	Hollings	Jeffords	Boxer	Specter <sup>-2</sup>	Lautenberg <sup>-2</sup>
Allard	Hutchinson	Baucus	Inouye		Feingold		
Ashcroft	Hutchison	Bayh	Kennedy		Harkin		
Bennett	Inhofe	Biden	Kerrey		Johnson		
Bond	Kyl	Bingaman	Kerry		Kohl		
Brownback	Lott	Breaux	Landrieu		Moynihan		
Bunning	Lugar	Bryan	Leahy		Reid		
Burns	Mack	Byrd	Levin		Schumer		
Campbell	McCain	Cleland	Lieberman		Wellstone		
Chafee	McConnell	Conrad	Lincoln		Wyden		
Cochran	Murkowski	Daschle	Mikulski				
Collins	Nickles	Dodd	Murray				
Coverdell	Roberts	Dorgan	Reed				
Craig	Roth	Durbin	Robb				
Crapo	Santorum	Edwards	Rockefeller				
DeWine	Sessions	Feinstein	Sarbanes				
Domenici	Shelby	Graham	Torricelli				
Enzi	Smith, Bob						
Fitzgerald	Smith, Gordon						
Frist	Snowe						
Gorton	Stevens						
Gramm	Thomas						
Grams	Thompson						
Grassley	Thurmond						
Gregg	Voinovich						
Hagel	Warner						
Hatch							

#### EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

#### SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

Compiled and written by the staff of the Republican Policy Committee—Larry E. Craig, Chairman

this plane only made marginal improvements rather than the huge improvements listed above, marginal improvements in weapons systems can often mean the difference between winning and losing.

The F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fighter program is ahead of schedule and it is under cost. It is being purchased on a fixed-price contract with performance incentives. Given these facts, the Feingold amendment initially appears to be harmless. However, it is dangerous in that it would not allow any increase in funding for what is termed "technology insertion." That term refers to the purchase of improved systems that may be developed during production. For instance, if a better radar system is developed that could significantly improve the capabilities of the fighter, we should have the option of putting it into the plane even if it results in a marginal increase in costs. In other words, under the Feingold amendment, we would be forced to settle for second-best for our pilots who fly the Super Hornet in combat. That result may please bean-counting accountants, but it may also result in lost American lives and lost wars. We oppose a requirement to settle for second-best, and thus urge our colleagues to vote in favor of the motion to table this amendment.

**Those opposing** the motion to table contended:

The Super Hornet is an expensive boondoggle. It costs twice as much as a Hornet but testing shows that it is only marginally better. The four justifications for making the plane are that it will have a greater range, that it will be more survivable, that it will have greater payload and bringback capabilities, and that it will have more space to add new features. In each of those four areas, though, it is failing to make significant improvements. On the range issue, actual flight test data has shown that it has only an 8-percent increase over the Hornet. That marginal improvement may be lost, depending on the solution that the Navy adopts to correct two other problems it has found: a wing-drop problem in combat that causes the plane to roll out of position; and a potential for dropped bombs to hit the plane or each other. Some of the proposed solutions for those two problems would reduce the plane's range. On the survivability issue, testing has found numerous deficiencies related to survivability, including that the fighter's exhaust burns through its decoy tow line. On the payload and bringback issue, the Navy has found a vibration problem on the wings that may damage the missiles that the plane carries. On the space issue, the General Accounting Office (GAO) reports that the plane will have only 5.46 cubic feet of usable growth space. The GAO has also found that the Super Hornet is actually worse than the Hornet in turning, accelerating, and climbing. It also has reported, contrary to the claims of the Navy, that the program is behind schedule and above cost. The Navy's claims of the plane's stellar performance are based on the testing of the single seat E model instead of the less capable two-seat F model. Given these troubles, we have proposed a very modest amendment to cap production costs at their currently projected level. Basically, the amendment would accept that the Defense Department and a majority of Members are determined to acquire this new fighter, but it would try to make sure that the costs do not get any worse than they are now projected to be. We are not asking for much with this amendment. We urge our colleagues to support it.